DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 048 RC 021 169

AUTHOR Roberts, Nina
TITLE Women of Color in Experiential Education: Crossing Cultural Boundaries.
PUB DATE 1996-00-00
NOTE 16p.; In: Women's Voices in Experiential Education; see RC 021 160.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adventure Education; Cultural Differences; Empowerment; Experiential Learning; *Females; Feminism; *Minority Groups; *Outdoor Education; Participation; Racial Attitudes; *Racial Bias; *Sex Bias
IDENTIFIERS *Barriers to Participation; Outdoor Leadership

ABSTRACT

Outdoor adventure is stereotyped as a White, male activity. Women who participate are going against the stereotype of outdoor activities as a male domain, but women of color additionally confront the domain of race. Constraints on women generally include socialization into an ethic of care, concern for physical and psychological safety, and lack of skills and opportunities. For women of color, prejudice and marginality accentuate any injustice or inequality. Cultural behaviors, women's roles, and constraints peculiar to African American, Native American, and Mexican American women are reviewed, and implications for their participation in outdoor education are discussed. Interviews with three women--one African American, one Chinese American, and one Chicana with Navajo ancestry--concerning leadership, gender issues, and experiences of outdoor adventure participation revealed differing perspectives. However, all interviewees felt that encouraging more women of color to be role models, such as mentors in internships, and involving school systems could increase participation rates and racial and ethnic diversity in professional leadership. Women of color felt that the fact that feminism is led by upper-class White women hurts the cause. Because social power has been denied to women of color, they must learn how to use power when in positions of leadership. Many feminists speak of power-with, rather than power-over. Designing outdoor programs that build cultural connections and offer a spiritual connection with nature is discussed, as are the different effects racism has on different people of color. Contains 25 references. (TD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 412 048

20

Women of Color in Experiential Education: Crossing Cultural Boundaries

Nina Roberts

An Overview

There is a need to be expansive in our thinking about the outdoor experience of diverse people in this society. Race and ethnic relations have been greatly shaped by historical perspectives, political correctness, social construction, cultural ideologies, and power structure. The intent of this chapter is to describe a connection of race and ethnicity to women's involvement in experiential education and recreation in the outdoors. Incorporating what has been found in the literature, I will discuss issues of empowerment, difference, socialization, spirituality, and leadership. It is well known that people of color, as both participants and leaders, make up a very small percentage of those involved in experiential education. Any research directed at why this is so will require a radical expansion of our usual categories of analysis.

Discussion of the outdoor adventure experiences of women in particular, quite often neglects experiences of women of color. Little is known about *how* ethnic background affects the quality and quantity of their experiences in the outdoors. It is therefore critical to understand not only the outdoor experience of all women, but to acknowledge and ascertain how race and ethnic relations shape each of us individually as well.

Just as we (as professionals) cannot make generalizations about all women as a single group, we also cannot make generalizations about women of color, since this group includes women from numerous racial, ethnic, and national origin backgrounds. Subsequently, although people of color are not a minority on a global scale, this chapter refers to the dominant culture as it relates to European Americans within U.S. society. Aguilar and Washington (1990) differentiate the terms *people of color, race,* and *ethnicity* as follows:

RC 021 169

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
B Baker
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

> The term people of color is used to refer to ethnic and racial groups that have previously been referred to as minorities. Race is used to refer to color (i.e., black, white, red, yellow) and makes distinctions primarily on physical characteristics. Ethnicity refers to affiliation with a social group due to heritage or nationality. (p. 50)

Aguilar and Washington (1990) state that "while ethnicity is often ascribed by others, we should consider that not everyone chooses to embrace their ethnic backgrounds. Thus, one may choose to identify or reject her/his ethnicity. Race, however, does not generally allow the same flexibility" (p. 50). Additionally, rather than maintain distinct social, economic, and political conventions, some ethnic groups experience a cultural assimilation into mainstream society. How, then, can minority groups have cross-cultural experience without losing traditional cultural values?

Socialization Research

Socialization experiences research primarily involves looking at the socioeconomic conditions of women of color (Baca-Zinn & Thornton-Dill, 1994; Floyd & Gramann, 1993). Where minority women are situated on the continuum of the economic ladder really conditions the quality and quantity of the experience they have. However, it is the cultural variables (e.g., language, traditions, values), rather than the socioeconomic factors, which are more important in understanding and explaining differences in participation patterns (Floyd & Gramann, 1993). Through my research, I've learned that the socialization of women of color pertaining to participation in outdoor recreational activities has been different from that of European American women. Social forces of race often affect the outdoor experiences of women of color. Combined with other social forces that affect all women (i.e., gender, class, sexual orientation, employment) are conditions such as lack of funds, lack of knowledge or understanding, and strong feelings of distrust for others (Hall, in Ashley, 1990), that have been more of a barrier for women of color than for European American women.

Women of color may not be aware of the opportunities often because certain activities have not been considered socially acceptable forms of recreation (Carr & Williams, 1993; Roberts & Drogin, 1993; Washington, 1990). For instance, while a European American woman might enjoy wilderness backpacking, an African American might prefer a walk in the park because she feels more comfortable in close proximity to a more "civilized" environment (i.e., large number of people and provision of facilities).

Further, to ignore the racial and gender classifications, is to ignore realities of multiple social identities. Women of color are aware that participation in outdoor adventures has traditionally been primarily stereotyped as a white, male activity. Although difficult to ascertain, the socialization of women of color, in general, has been exclusive of opportunities for outdoor adventure experience. For instance, it is

essential for white women and women of color to know that women in general are going against the stereotype of outdoor activities as a male domain. However, while white women are going against the concept of gender, women of color additionally confront the domain of race.

Constraints to Participation

While research about the experience of women and the experience of people of color exists, the full range of opportunities and experience for women of color in experiential education has yet to be addressed. Various limiting factors may affect participation. Media images and marketing for experiential programs, for instance, quite often omit women of color. A cultural lag exists between the media's presentation of women of diverse ethnic backgrounds and their changing rate of participation in outdoor activities.

The few images which portray women as attractive, glamorous, and possessing strong European features may discourage women of color. That is, the message received in such instances is that attractiveness, success, and popularity are basically unattainable for females of color (Boyd, 1990). Furthermore, Kane and Parks (1990), from their examination of *Sports Illustrated*, indicate that males receive significantly more comments than females. Findings from this study suggest that men's sports are more important than women's sports due to the dominant ratings and greater coverage in all aspects, including athletic ability. "If women internalize this message, they may believe that their abilities as serious athletes are not valued" (p. 47).

Given the power of the media to influence one's behavior, it becomes difficult to make participation decisions also based on photographs in brochures, for instance, if none depict women of color. "If there are no women like me in these pictures of outdoor activities, why should I participate?" is a question sometimes asked (Roberts, 1992).

Bialeschki and Henderson (1993) have been in the forefront of research pertaining to women in recreation, outdoor pursuits, and the constraints to participation which they face. Although living in a more progressive society where women's roles have changed drastically during the last 50 years, the constraints on women's involvement in outdoor activities persists and is undeniably linked to issues of gender. "Some women may not participate in certain activities because of the perceived gender appropriateness of them. In other cases, the roles expected of women will result in their being directed into particular roles" (p. 38). It is important to note that Bialeschki and Henderson's investigation of women's participation in the outdoors has focused on European American women. Not to say their discourse ignores women of color, but it's no different than other researchers' analyses of people of color in the outdoors—which is quite minimal. A significant point I want to note is that participation for women of color has limitations in the greater society as well. Baca-Zinn and Thornton-Dill (1994) suggest that restricted participation in social

institutions and structured placement in roles with limited opportunities are distinct constraining factors in the lives of women of color. Racial oppression and class domination create barriers, limit possibilities, and constrain choices (p. 5).

Other constraints which Bialeschki and Henderson (1993) discuss include women's socialization into an ethic of care (placing others' needs before their own), safety issues (physical and psychological), and lack of skills and opportunities (i.e., continuum of choices limited by time and money). For women of color, added stresses of either noticeable or covert prejudice and marginality accentuate any injustice, or inequality, that they may experience (Baca-Zinn & Thornton-Dill, 1994; Locke, 1992; Albrecht & Brewer, 1990).

Defining the Cultural Experience as Related to the Outdoors

How and why have the outdoor experiences of culturally different groups and subgroups been similar to and different from one another? How and why have the outdoor experiences of culturally different groups been similar to and different from the dominant culture? To better understand a particular cultural group, it is important to not only study information about the specific groups, but to also foster an appreciation of the wide diversity of individual experience.

Further, to understand the "myth of the model minority" is to understand "privilege." That is, some members of a minority group accept cultural patterns of the dominant group (acculturation) and sacrifice the traditional values and customs of their own culture. This is a way of achieving recognition so as not to "make waves" (which historically has led to lynching or other acts of violence toward ethnic minorities). Often these myths are rooted in political and/or religious ideology.

African American Women

For African American women, constraints to participation are similar to those discussed by Bialeschki and Henderson (1993) (i.e., time, money, family responsibility, lack of opportunity), yet may be accentuated based on their cultural context. For instance, in the African American community, an inescapable aspect of socialization and nurturing is to prepare the family for survival and protect them from an environment that is covertly, if not overtly, hostile, racist, and discriminatory. "The likelihood of major progress in eliminating racism is remote" (Locke, 1992, p. 21). For many African American women, outdoor programs are too threatening and they struggle with a fear of failure or uncertainty. Reasons for this range from lack of knowledge, low self-esteem due to fear of judgment by white people, to the dominance of white people as primary participants in outdoor-based programs. Support and participation by others from a similar culture or minority support system may ameliorate the problem of safety (Roberts & Drogin, 1993). A history of segregation and discrimination against African Americans has separated them from the dominant culture (Locke, 1992; Donald & Rattansi, 1992). This isolation has created a lack of exposure and inability to gain valuable skills in experiential education.

Roberts and Drogin (1993) looked at factors affecting participation in outdoor recreation activities of African American women. Primarily based on interviews, their conclusions were quite similar to Ashley's concepts developed from the study conducted by Hall (in Ashley, 1990). That is, nonparticipation can be attributed to perceptions of race and gender (e.g., socialization and "appropriateness" of activities), lack of role models, lack of exposure, difficulty accessing wilderness from urban areas, and, in some instances, economic conditions.

Native American Women

Ceremonies, rituals, and traditions for Native American women provide a spiritual ethic of care that is rich in nonverbal language. Learning in Native culture is often based on listening, watching others, and experience. Forced from their sacred and valuable lands, Native Americans were stripped of their cultural identity and relegated to property unwanted by white people (Locke, 1992). A culture which passes on traditions and customs through oral myths and legends, Native Americans both live and learn holistically (p. 51). They believe, for instance, that children should be allowed to make mistakes and learn the natural consequences of their mistakes. They develop an inner motivation to learn by seeking out knowledge of human experience (More, 1987).

The Native American family structure and dynamics assert that the female is responsible for and performs the duties necessary to preserve the "social organization." Unlike the dominant culture, Native Americans traditionally trace their family history through matrilinear descent. The primary constraint to participation in experiential programs or activities is the dominant culture "forcing Native Americans to live a difficult and impoverished existence" (Locke, p. 48). It was the taking of this land—occupied by Native Americans—by the dominant white culture which sent a message that the Native American culture was inferior (Locke, 1992; More, 1987). The land that many European Americans take for granted as a means to fulfill outdoor experiences may have sacred and spiritual power to Native Americans.

One of the goals of outdoor adventure is to feel the experience, explore the natural environment, and draw valid and meaningful conclusions based on these personal experiences. Subsequently, as each individual is a product of their cultural environment, it can be learned from Native American culture that respect for nature magnifies a self-discovery not obtained in any other surroundings. The focus of experiential activities is often individual self-exploration and discovery, and instilling an appreciation for the natural world. Such programs are truly complementary to Native American values.

So why are there so few Native American women participating in structured outdoor programs? As stated by Luther Standing Bear, Oglala Sioux Chief, "The American Indian is of the soil, whether it be the region of forests, plains, pueblos, or mesas. He [sic] fits into the landscape . . . he [sic] once grew as naturally as the wild sunflowers; he [sic] belongs just as the buffalo belonged . . ." (Aaron & Borgenicht, 1993). In essence, the message is that "structure" reduces what is a viable part of life

to begin with. Subsequently, from an early age, Native Americans know who they are and what their heritage is. Being proud to be related to the land is part of the traditional culture. Hepsi Barnett, an Osage Indian, proclaims that Native people could never imagine paying money to go and be out on the land. "In many parts of the country they are already living on the land; it is an everyday thing for them" (personal communication, January 1995). For Native people, the earth and their minds are one; the measure of the land and the measure of their bodies are the same. Why place "structure" to that which is already known and practiced?

Asian American Women

In Asian American culture, women tend to be dependent, conforming, obedient to men, inhibited and reserved, less ready to express impulses, and less assertive (Sue, 1981). Women from this culture emphasize suppression of strong feelings and stress family as well as community over the individual. Unlike the dominant culture, according to Locke (1992), Asian American women approach time in an unhurried, flexible manner; additionally, moral virtue and showing respect for the elderly is essential. In the area of social relations, the avoidance of conflict and instilling harmony is valued in the Asian American culture (Locke, 1992).

Historically, Asians have been unwilling victims of derogatory stereotyping throughout the United States (Sue, 1981). The first immigrants were all males because the only females allowed to immigrate were prostitutes. The "success" of Asian immigrants can be attributed, in part, to their emphasis on education and a very strong system of discipline (Sue, 1981; Locke, 1992). Locke (1992) characterized their success based on a continuation of racist and prejudiced thinking by the dominant U.S. culture. In other words, because Asian Americans were socially isolated, this provided the ingredients for them to adjust to inherent problems within the dominant culture (e.g., ". . . the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 [was] the only federal statute to deny citizenship to an entire people because they were considered undesirable" p. 87). This isolation manifests itself by indicating to individuals in the Asian culture that they can succeed if they work hard enough; therefore, if one does not succeed, it is not because of forces operating in society, but because of other factors such as racial inferiority (Locke, 1992).

Many Asian American women devote themselves to raising their children while experiencing a strong push for them to excel academically. Watanabe (1973) describes the family system as patriarchal; authority of the father remains unquestioned. Subservience to males is the female's role in the family, along with performing domestic duties.

Culturally, Asian Americans place an emphasis on nonverbal communication and the use of silence as a safe response to uncertain situations (Locke, 1992, p. 74). All of these points concerning Asian Americans, in general, may be applicable to any variety of subcultures (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese). Implications for experiential learning may relate to pursuing a course of cultural enrichment, rather than cultural change. For example, providing a nonthreatening group

climate to encourage more verbal participation (i.e., language barriers often cause discomfort and a difficulty with communication) may enhance the experience. Because women and girls are under very strict supervision by male family members, opportunities for increasing confidence and independence through experiential programs is great. Adventure activities may provide an avenue for self-expression otherwise suppressed in their culture.

Mexican American Women

The Hispanic population is growing steadily, and it is quickly becoming the largest minority group in the United States. Mexican Americans (a cultural mix of Spanish, Indian, and American) account for 60% of the Hispanic population (Locke, 1992; Donald & Rattansi, 1992). Historically, many Mexicans fought with the Americans in order to acquire the independent state of Texas, only to find themselves as foreigners; the Mexican government relinquished the Southwestern territories to the United States under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Locke, 1992). Hence, immigrating from Mexico to the U.S. was based on a strong desire for change and opportunity.

By "standards" of the dominant culture, Mexican Americans have experienced little social progress; additionally, they are markedly behind other cultures in the total amount of education, occupations, income, housing, political representation, and professional identification (Locke, 1992). Many newly emerging Mexican American organizations have been formed to demand social and political equality.

During adolescence, a female remains closer to home than males and is protected and guarded whenever she comes in contact with individuals beyond her family (Mirande, 1985). Mirande (1985) contends that based on relationships with her mother and other female relatives, the Mexican American female is prepared for the role of wife and mother. Conversely, a male is given freedom to come and go as he chooses and is encouraged to obtain "worldly" knowledge and experience in order to prepare for his role as husband and father.

While individuals of the dominant culture are taught to value being open, frank, and direct, the traditional Mexican American approach uses a diplomatic and tactful means of communicating with other people (Mirande, 1985; Locke, 1992). However, interesting and often-misunderstood values and attitudes relate to this manner of expression. For instance, Mexican Americans aim to be "elaborate and indirect" because their goal is to make the personal relationship at least appear to be harmonious in order to show some respect for the other's individuality. "To the Mexican American, direct argument or contradiction appears to be rude and disrespectful" (Locke, 1992, p. 40). Superficially, there may be some agreement, yet their manner of expression dictates they ought not reveal true feelings openly unless the two people know each other well, and if there is sufficient time to express differences with tact.

Implications for experiential education may be expressed through the development of relationships. Proudman (1992) described the experiential process as a series of relationships: the learner to self, the learner to teacher, and the learner to the learning environment. His discussion of the variables involved included the

importance of responsibility for self-growth, defining boundaries, and understanding different learning experiences and varying reactions individuals have to the same learning environment.

Pertaining to outdoor recreation as the experiential learning medium, Mexican Americans tend to participate in large groups and with extended families. Floyd and Gramann (1993) conducted an analysis of outdoor recreation patterns of Mexican Americans and concluded that the effects of acculturation, the process of a minority group acquiring the cultural characteristics of the dominant group (p. 8), were primarily expressed in which types of activities were chosen versus which outdoor areas were visited. For example, fishing, tent camping, and off-road vehicle use were activities highly valued; whether they occurred adjacent to a local river or within a national forest was secondary to the opportunity itself. Additionally, it was demonstrated that assuming all ethnic groups are culturally homogeneous is a fallacy (i.e., U.S.-born Mexican American, born in Mexico, parents born in Mexico, Spanish influence). Just as there is no one Anglo type, there is no one Mexican family type.

What role do variables such as socioeconomic status, social class, race, and gender play in the outdoor recreation activities in which Mexican American females become involved? I have found no supporting research which has broken down the variables by gender. We must employ new methods of investigation and examine the various social and cultural variables influencing socialization of Mexican American women into adventure education. Although, within their culture, Mexican American women are supposed to be completely devoted to the men and serve their every need, they also ought to be provided an opportunity to take initiative, increase decision-making skills, and participate in self-directed learning activities in outdoor-based programs.

Perceptions of Participation: Three Case Studies

Roberts (1992) elicited perspectives on leadership, gender issues, experiences of outdoor adventure participation (with friends, with organized groups, or solo) from several women of color. Because of their unique backgrounds and various regional representations, three women were selected as case studies to provide personal perspectives for this chapter (i.e., African American, Chinese American, and Chicana with Navajo ancestry). They speak from their experiences as women of color in a field that has historically not heard their voices.

In order to convey the detail of these personal accounts, while including a brief background but not revealing the actual names of these women, fictitious names have been used to profile their experiences. The African American woman will be known as "Angela." She's a 31-year-old counselor and teaching aide from Arkansas. Her interests include reading poetry and short stories and travel. The Chinese American woman, who shall be called "Suyuan," is a 50-year-old teacher from Baltimore, Maryland. She enjoys woodworking, sports, crafts, and travel in the outdoors.

Lastly, "Evelyn" is a 33-year-old program coordinator working for a Native American youth program in New Mexico. She is a Chicana woman with Navajo ancestry. Her interests include a variety of cultural activities, outdoor activities, reading, and cooking.

Leadership

These women felt that encouraging more women of color to be role models, restructuring of internships to include distinct mentoring relationships, and greater involvement of the school system (e.g., career days that highlight opportunities for women of color to pursue nontraditional fields) might contribute to a change in participation rates and add to a greater racial and ethnic diversity in professional leadership.

The outdoor experiential education movement has only just begun to provide an avenue of leadership opportunities for minorities. For women of color, the interest in programming, supervising, and directing outdoor activities is growing. These opportunities may be more community-based and centered in areas where people of color live (Roberts, 1992). An important aspect shared by the women in these case studies is for professionals to remember that the outdoors has become one of the *many* ways for women to find self-fulfillment. Professionals in the field should provide encouragement, but should also be reminded that not all women share the same passions in life.

Empowerment

Denise Mitten (1992), who has worked with women's groups for over 15 years, confirms that women have attributed life changes and positive experiences to their participation in outdoor trips. Personal benefits regarding empowerment and self-esteem are overwhelmingly expressed. Angela and Evelyn were in accord that participation in outdoor activities builds confidence and offers challenges not available anywhere else. Such opportunity, they agreed, provides a spirituality and personal time for "getting in balance" with themselves. On the other hand, Suyuan did not feel that the outdoors empowers women in particular and that the same empowerment (i.e., meeting physical and/or mental demands that one thought were too much) is the same empowerment that applies to anyone. She also expressed difficulty in seeing why women of color need to be "so strongly separated" from the rest of the population.

Evelyn and Angela described their source of energy and personal empowerment as it related to knowledge of their heritage, family, religion, and an array of multicultural experiences. Additional comments ranged from finding a strong foundation and gaining strength and mutual support of women within a community, to enjoying the simple pleasures of nature. Although Suyuan felt that some ethnic cultures have rituals and customs that can be a powerful means of sharing and celebrating, she believes that what empowers women of color should be the same as that which empowers anyone else; that is, "a sense of self and mission, a belief in oneself and a

trust in the goodness of what lies ahead." Her own creativity and ideas give her energy along with the excitement that comes from thinking about the adventure of trying something new.

Feminist Theory and the Structure of Power

Perspectives differ in terms of feminism, leadership, and power. Based on the work of Starhawk, Albrecht and Brewer (1990) assert that when many feminists speak of power, it is often *power-with*, rather than *power-over*. And, access to social power is a privilege. The element of privilege is significant in that it may be different based on gender, class, education, ability, etc. This is a multifaceted concept which must be recognized. Power differences between groups, and within groups, when crossing cultural boundaries and creating alliances, are also important. White people, men, and middle- and upper-class people monopolize a disproportionate amount of power in a society divided along race, class, and gender lines (p. 5). The issue for women's alliances is to recognize power differences and positions of privilege, and to create bridges to link these differences.

The implications of this power structure upon women's leadership models is dramatic. Albrecht and Brewer (1990) looked at how women have developed alternative leadership strategies and whether these strategies have worked toward the building of alliances among women. In the context of building alliances, the essays in their book support the fact that in order to effect change at various levels, each woman must risk using her own personal power (p. 6). Not only must women take responsibility for breaking down their own barriers of internalized oppression and internalized domination, they must also come to understand that the cultural, racial, class, generational, sexual, ethnic, and religious diversities among them are what create different leadership styles. Internalized dominance for white women may pertain to race; yet for women of color, it is racism. To successfully cross these boundaries, individuals must listen and respect each other and learn about differences. Subsequently, differences should not be viewed as boundaries, but recognized for just what they are, "differences."

As symbolized in the three case studies, Evelyn expressed that *feminism* as a movement is perceived or led by upper-class white women. She believes this hurts the cause of feminism throughout the country. She affirmed that her identity is linked more to her cultural background than to gender. Angela supported the notion that the cultural context of her ethnicity defines feminism for her as a woman of color. Conversely, Suyuan believes that feminism needs a new broader definition so that the women's ways of knowing and doing and being can be applied to any human being, whether female or male. Although this belief cannot (and should not) be judged, this is a cultural way of thinking that may suppress the reality of positions of privilege and acknowledgment of who is in positions of power.

I suggest that because ways of knowing are part of our total experience, bringing a feminist perspective to the outdoors may have a cultural component. Outdoor leadership, for instance, does not denote *power-over* for many women; instead, it

creates an ethical and inclusive style that encourages rather than limits participation (Mitten, 1992). Because access to social power has traditionally been denied to women of color (Albrecht & Brewer, 1990), when placed in positions of leadership the application is how to flourish this "power" and how to transform it. To be an effective outdoor leader, therefore, the questions for women of color become, Power to do what? And for whom? (Roberts, 1994).

Building Cultural Connections

Greater alliances and deeper coalitions are needed to cross cultural boundaries. How can these be formed? Responses to this question also elicited varying comments. Suyuan indicated that women who choose to work together must start by simply being together until a friendship is developed and the fact of color differences disappear. She stated, "People with a particular need work together; similarity of color is never an automatic criteria for being able to form a coalition."

Angela believed there should be deep and honest discussion of prejudices, biases, and misconceptions between European and African Americans. Although this view is meritorious, it is important to distinguish this from the need for greater discussion of these issues *between* ethnicities. People of color must recognize their responsibility to reduce the myth of the stereotypes which are prevalent in society. Alperin (in Albrecht & Brewer, 1990) concurs that it is imperative for oppressed groups with different viewpoints to form alliances in order to understand how different types of oppression interact. Angela's argument is that if different critical standpoints are more readily available to different oppressed groups through struggle, and if different types of oppression are interrelated, then it would follow that a thorough understanding of the complexity of social relations—in any particular moment—could be most effectively achieved through alliances between groups with different standpoints.

One pertinent connection I want to make relating to experiential education is that the values being taught (i.e., self-confidence, teamwork, compassion, and service to others) ought to have meaning to all people and relate to the rich diversity of individuals venturing into the outdoors. The values being taught and learned perhaps in a challenging wilderness environment are universally important and can be achieved at a greater level if shared across cultures.

Culture and Spirituality

The outdoors can offer a spiritual connection with nature not experienced anywhere else. How can women of color explore their uniqueness and the richness of their particular ethnicity, appearance, and traditions in outdoor activities? A comment offered by Evelyn in response was that newer experiential activities need to be developed, incorporating multigenerational and traditional culture-specific activities of minorities. Angela felt that spirituality can be magnified by using personal heritage to explore the outdoors and "discover the physical bonds we share with our ancestors who first explored the wilderness, and who used the bounty of the woods,

fields and streams for medicine and food from what they discovered." Suyuan expressed her personal conviction that it is in being with each other that any minority group finds support and bonding, hence collectively exploring uniqueness and spiritual connections to the environment and to each other.

Discrimination and Racism

Cultural diversity mandates acknowledgment that women act differently to reach certain goals based on the historical impact of racism on their lives. Racism, however, has not affected all people of color in the same way. For instance, many Native American women were coerced off their tribal lands by the U.S. government and forced into white society, whereas African American women have a history of segregation from the white dominant system (Baca-Zinn & Thornton-Dill, 1994; Albrecht & Brewer, 1990).

Every ethnic culture retains a key linked to the power of survival for the women of color. For some Latina women, this may involve speaking only in their native tongue; African American women may find comfort in religion; and some Native women may turn to purification rituals (Boyd, 1990). "For many women of color defining a sense of identity through rituals and traditional customs is paramount in developing a stronger sense of self individually and collectively" (p. 158). I must add that these examples are not intended to reinforce any stereotypes; any method used by women of color to "survive" may not be that distinct or simple, and can be quite complex.

Chavez (as reported in Henderson & Bedini, 1992) explored diversity among various ethnic groups as related to outdoor recreation behavior. She found that groups of European American, Hispanic American, and Mexican American individuals enjoyed and appreciated similar activities and had the same beliefs about crowding issues. The most significant difference between ethnic groups was their "perceived exposure to discriminatory acts." Those individuals identifying as part of a minority group were more likely to perceive themselves as having been subject to these acts, whereas European Americans did not hold the same perception due to their experience in a society that reinforces the myth of "equality." As one of the goals of experiential education is to develop leadership skills, then the process whereby leaders learn, understand, and accept differences may be a catalyst to decreasing the elements of racism and discrimination likely to be perceived by people of color when participating in outdoor activities.

Conclusion

In order to effectively counsel or teach women of color in the outdoors, a relationship must be created across cultural boundaries. Leaders must first be aware of their own cultural heritage and worldview before they will be able to understand and appreciate those of the culturally diverse individuals they serve.

"It is in cross-cultural settings within our own society and internationally that the most powerful, life-changing experiential learning can and often does occur" (Kraft, 1992, p. 14). In his discussion of moral courage, Kraft (1992) contends that it is the power of cross-cultural experience that brings justice into our society. Unfortunately, our communities remain segregated along class, racial, and ethnic lines. Experiential education, according to Kraft, is an extremely powerful tool for helping to bridge those gaps which continuously lead to riots, starvation, homelessness, violence, spread of diseases, and other devastating circumstances. What influence will the growth of such problems have on the roles of educators and leaders? What influence will racism and gender relations have on these roles?

Most of the existing literature of people of color discusses ethnicity from the broader context to include Native, African, Asian, and Latina Americans (NAALAs); it is my conviction that more work needs to look at acculturation, identity as a subgroup as well as the experience of individuals who are biracial (e.g., whether between varying ethnic groups, or between white people and people of color). The existence of biracial people forces professionals and society to re-think the meaning of race and the predicated social order. For instance, skin color and social definitions may run counter to one another when different cultures mix (Root, 1992).

Theories must be developed and research, both qualitative and quantitative, conducted with reference to ethnic diversity and specifically, women of color. Findings must then be put into practice to cross cultural boundaries and ensure that programs are inclusive and optimally beneficial to *all* groups of people.

It is especially incumbent upon women in the field to examine research findings on women of color so that we can assist in the self-empowering of all women involved in experiential education and outdoor recreational activities. Well-developed experiences can inspire women of color to continue to raise their voices, and to refuse to be silenced by traditions carried over from society into the outdoors. But women leaders need to go further; we need to help people connect with one another, share our knowledge, share our skills and our competencies, increase awarenesses and acceptances of all people, and all peoples' experience. This brings us together as one. We need to cross cultural boundaries in order to celebrate our similarities as well as our differences.

We must strive to confirm and support the abilities of women in general. This has to do with understanding some of the barriers that are prevalent in society, and working deliberately and consciously toward ridding society and the field of experiential education of these barriers that tend to oppress all women. Subsequently, it is important that we continue traditions of role modeling and enhance the need for women of color to mentor other young women and provide the necessary opportunities so that we can build upon former traditions, and create new traditions in the area of women of color in the outdoors.

Acknowledgments

The topic of race and culture is both varied and complex; the questions which can be raised by the information and issues presented in this article should lead us to further inquiry in the field of experiential education. I would like to thank Ellen Drogin who offered her insight during the early stages of editing. Special thanks to Karen Warren for encouraging me to persevere, to Nancy Hogan for her valuable feedback, and to the reviewers of this chapter for their comprehensive evaluation. Very special thanks to Sharon Washington for her expertise and assistance; her advice and support was integral to completion of this chapter.

References

Aaron, G. C., & Borgenicht, D. (1993). *Native American wisdom.* Philadelphia, PA: Running Press.

Aguilar, T. E., & Washington, S. J. (1990). Towards the inclusion of multicultural issues in leisure studies curricula. *Schole: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation, 5,* 41-52.

Albrecht, L., & Brewer, R. M. (Eds.). (1990). *Bridges of power: Women's multicultural alliances.* Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers.

Ashley, F. (1990). Ethnic minorities' involvement with outdoor experiential education. In J. C. Miles & S. Priest (Eds.), *Adventure education.* State College, PA: Venture.

Baca-Zinn, M., & Thornton-Dill, B: (1994). *Women of color in U.S. society.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University.

Bialeschki, M. D., & Henderson, K. A. (1993). Expanding outdoor opportunities for women. *Parks and Recreation, 28*(8), 36-40.

Boyd, J. A. (1990). Ethnic and cultural diversity: Keys to power. *Women and Therapy, 9,* 151-167.

Carr, D. S., & Williams, D. R. (1993). Understanding the role of ethnicity in outdoor recreation experiences. *Journal of Leisure Research, 25*(1), 22-38.

Donald, J., & Rattansi, A. (1992). *Race, culture & difference.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Floyd, M. F., & Gramann, J. H. (1993). Effects of acculturation and structural assimilation in resource-based recreation: The case of Mexican Americans. *Journal of Leisure Research, 25*(1), 6-21.

Henderson, K. A., & Bedini, L. A. (1992). NRPA leisure research symposium showcases current park and recreation research. *Parks and Recreation, 1,* 16-25, 90.

Kane, M. J., & Parks, J. B. (1990). Media messages of female athletes: Gender-role expectations as barriers to leisure. National Recreation and Park Association Congress, Phoenix, Arizona. (Abstracts from the Symposium on Leisure Research, p. 47).

Kraft, R. J. (1992). Closed classrooms, high mountains and strange lands: An inquiry into culture and caring. *Journal of Experiential Education, 15*(3), 8-15.

Locke, D. C. (1992). *Increasing multicultural understanding.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Mirande, A. (1985). *The Chicano experience: An alternative perspective.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Mitten, D. (1992). Empowering girls and women in the outdoors. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 63*(2), 56-60.

More, A. J. (1987). Native Indian learning styles: A review for researchers and teachers. *Journal of American Indian Education, 27,* 17-28.

Proudman, B. (1992). Experiential education as emotionally-engaged learning. *Journal of Experiential Education, 15*(2), 19-23.

Roberts, N. S. (1994). *Women of color in outdoor recreation: A collection of personal stories.* Unpublished collection. College Park, Maryland.

Roberts, N. S. (1992). *Women of color: Building bridges to adventure.* Unpublished case studies, College Park, Maryland.

Roberts, N. S., & Drogin, E. B. (1993). Factors affecting participation of African American women. *Journal of Experiential Education, 16*(1), 14-18.

Root, M. P. P. (1992). *Racially mixed people in America.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Sue, D. W. (1981). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice.* New York: John Wiley.

Washington, S. J. (1990). Provision of leisure services to people of color. *Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 10,* 37-39.

Watanabe, C. (1973). Self-expression and the Asian-American experience. *Personnel and Guidance Journal, 51,* 390-396.